

Assessment of the impacts of conservation and livelihood improvement initiatives in Mutanikhola watershed under JOAC Samrakshyan Project

1. Context:

CARE Nepal, with financial support from the Jersey Overseas Aid Commission (JOAC), and in partnership with NFGF Nepal and FECOFUN, is implementing the Samrakshyan Project in the Mutanikhola watershed, Siraha district, Nepal. The project is working with 32 farmer groups and 9 community forests, supporting communities that depend on natural resources such as bamboo, firewood, fodder, timber, and riverbed materials (boulders, gravel, sand) for their livelihoods.

The initiative aims to strengthen community capacity for biodiversity conservation and watershed management while promoting sustainable and inclusive livelihoods. It supports communities through conservation field schools, climate-smart agriculture, and enterprise development. Special emphasis has been placed on empowering women and marginalized groups by improving access to natural and financial resources. The project has strengthened watershed level coordination committee and community forest user groups (CFUGs), enhancing collaboration with government bodies and contributing to policy integration of successful practices.

To date, the project has achieved notable progress, including:

- Increased conservation awareness through Conservation Field Schools (CFS)
- Development of integrated watershed management action plans (including forest fire control)
- Promotion of climate-smart and pesticide-free agriculture practices
- Capacity building of farmers, citizen scientists and CFUG members
- Introduction of conservation agriculture practices focusing on soil health and environmental sustainability

2. Rationale

The project has generated some progressive results in conservation practices; there is a need for **systematic assessment and evidence generation** to understand its impact on both conservation outcomes and livelihood improvements. This concept proposes mobilizing technical experts to conduct assessments aligned with project indicators, thereby strengthening learning, accountability, and future programming.

Key areas of impact that can be measured under this scope of collaboration include:

- Expansion of year-round irrigation areas
- Reduction in land erosion
- Area under agroforestry and active protection measures
- Changes in flora and fauna species diversity
- Economic outcomes of livelihoods, agroforestry and entrepreneurship support

3. Scope of Assessment

The assessment will focus on selected project intervention areas within the Mutanikhola watershed, covering:

- Community Forest User Groups (CFUGs)
- Households benefiting from conservation and livelihood interventions
- Farmer groups engaged in conservation field school, saving/credit, agroforestry practices, climate-smart agriculture practices

4. Methodology

The consultant will be responsible for leading the overall assessment design. A mixed-methods approach can be adopted combining quantitative and qualitative techniques:

- **Field observations and ecological assessments** for biodiversity and land-use changes
- **GIS and remote sensing analysis** for land cover, erosion, and irrigation mapping (where feasible)
- **Key informant interviews (KIIs)** with community leaders, CFUG members, and government stakeholders
- **Focus group discussions (FGDs)** with farmers, women, and vulnerable groups
- **Case studies** documenting successful conservation practices

5. Expected Outcomes

- Evidence-based assessment report on project outcomes and impacts
- Quantitative data on conservation and livelihood indicators
- Documentation of best practices and success stories and knowledge generation

6. Timeline

The assessment is expected to be completed within 1 month including design, data collection, analysis, and reporting phases.

7. Submission Guidelines

Interested applicants should submit:

- Technical proposal (approach and methodology).
- Financial proposal.
- CVs of key personnel.
- Examples of similar work.
- Company registration documents along with the latest tax clearance certificate

8. Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation will be conducted in four stages, with a total score of 100 marks as follows:

Stage 1: Technical Evaluation - 70 Marks

- Methodology (Impact, Business and System)
- Team composition and expertise
- Demonstrated understanding of the assignment
- Clear workplan with Timeline
- Organizational experiences and demonstration of any relevant prior works if any

Stage 2: In-Person Meeting and Discussion — 10 Marks

- Formal meeting with the top three (3) shortlisted consultancy firms
- Presentation of approach and clarifications on proposed methodology

Stage 3: Financial Evaluation — 20 Marks

- 5 marks – Legal compliance
- 5 marks – Quality and clarity of the financial proposal

Stage 4: Consolidation of Scores and Final Ranking

- Combined scoring from all stages
- Ranking of consultancy firms
- Recommendation for award of contract

Note: A consultancy firm must obtain a minimum of 80% of the total technical evaluation score to be considered eligible for the further interview stage.